

**Acces Asie SYMPOSIUM  
September 18, 2010 in Montreal.**

Perspectives in local, national and international touring.

By Alvin Erasga Tolentino

**WHY I TOUR**

**1. To be a creative ambassador, celebrate and empower the art of dance.**

- pour être un ambassadeur créatif, pour célébrer et renforcer l'art de la danse.

I am a dancer and a choreographer, What I make, engage and represent is the art of dance when I am performing, presenting, discussing and sharing my work to touring engagements, this is the art form that I can contribute to uplift the spirit of humanity.

**2. To extend and sustain the life of my creative work.**

- pour donner une dimension nouvelle et supplémentaire à mes créations.

I don't think that making dance is cheap, the time and cost of research/production versus 4 nights of presentation in my hometown does not justify the meaning of dance making for me, I also believe that production is not the final product but a result to also question and investigate further the life of that creative work, by touring there is an extension, continuing the life of a piece work, sharing outside my home base to extended performances within regional, national and international presentations.

**3. To create educational and outreach engagements, learn, understand and see other dance and dance artists outside my region.**

- pour permettre des engagements éducatifs et une ouverture, pour apprendre, comprendre, voir d'autres danses et d'autres artistes, d'autres horizons.

I am provided the chance to educate other artists and vice versa by conversing and exchanging my creativity to them, through performances, master classes, choreographic workshops or simply dialogue or discourse after a show to the general public or students.

**4. To expand and diversify my reach of audiences.**

- pour étendre et diversifier mon public.

I am able to understand and discover the diverse audiences I have for dance worldwide.

In my recent tour in Fredericton and Winnipeg I was delighted to be expose and witness other Asian communities and their growing sense of visibility but also to the survival and struggle to empower the Asian cultural heritage.

To Montreal, to my surprise, to an impeccable and warm audiences that were beyond satisfaction at the theatre of La Maison Frontenac.

**5. To meet and immerse to other communities, their culture, people and creative foundations.**

- pour aller à la rencontre d'autres communautés, d'autres cultures, d'autres personnes, avec leurs processus de création.

By touring I learn to understand the situation of other nations their cultural backgrounds and historical social point of views and their relation to the arts.

**6. To collaborate and partner with other organizations, venues, festivals and artists.**

- pour collaborer et établir des partenariats avec d'autres organisations, lieux, festivals et artistes

BY touring I am able to build networks, meet new artists, understanding producers, festivals, venues, and how I can work with their mandate and existing resources.

## **TOURING (the traveling art)**

The scope of touring is immense from the first risk taking initiatives to fully enjoying the experience and journey of the traveling work. The multitude of work with touring, from visioning, planning, negotiating, financing and traveling can have its complexities and is certainly not meant for everyone; It is an ongoing development and process.

No one really taught me how to tour, I was partly exposed to it, but mostly taught myself and discovered the stages and networks best suited or related to my work; assessing not just the economical, and geographical issues involved, but the relevance of the engagements to my work and artistry.

My eagerness to get my work seen is coupled with a willingness to do the hard work involved and take risks; Learning the pathways, understanding the complexity, seriousness, and hard work that lead to the fulfilling aspects of touring.

From the starting point of how and where a new work can begin, from research/residency to creations/presentation that could take, shape and go to, to negotiating contracts and fees, technical needs, venues, suitable dates, Marketing, transporting the work on the road and returning it back.

To me, the basic definition of touring is when you are able to leave, step outside your home base, to another town, or city within your regional scope or province, or into a national level or even overseas in pursuit of sharing your creative art work and visions at another place.

***(a note that in some grant application, it is indicated how much distance /or kilometers that is considered touring outside your home base to be eligible and funded for such a grant)***

## **What can tour?**

I suppose pretty much anything, but within the arts for sure are: (Performances, contemporary-traditional, music, dance, theater, spoken words, new media/technology, visual arts, etc.. )

In my case, contemporary dance with-content fusing together my western and Asian backgrounds, roots, themes, interests and aesthetics that have led also to collaboration with other diverse artists and multi-media creations and presentations and finding a suitable arena to extend the life of these works.

Today, there are numerous, if not hundreds of places to tour and present one's work to; festivals, exhibitions or the seasonal presentation programming of a theatre/venue.

There has been a growing global phenomena, a connectivity that brings creative people and their work together; exchanges and presentations through festivals, special events, symposium, marketing/showcase initiatives that are held annually, biennales and even Quadrennial in continents as North America, Asia, Europe and South America. Some are new and smaller, others are larger and established events.

In my observations, exchanges and travel through recent years in different continents, the growing interest in the role of touring and arts presentation, whether in the performing arts exclusively or in other mediums, is shifting dramatically beyond and outside a stage presence and proscenium - Shifting how art is creatively extended playing into the role, relation with and connection to the themes and issues of social activism, community factors and causes, diversity and globalization, advanced technology and the expansion of communications, as well to the response of a global economic crisis resulting with the lack or lost of funding, reduce in programming and even closure of venues.

Touring also intersects the field of educational systems, moving to schools and colleges that reach to, and are specialized for young audiences.

Artists, companies, artistic works are responding to these needs, changes, and trends to re-evaluate the presence of art in society.

**A few examples of festivals and events that have taken place in Canada:**

- Asian Heritage Month festivals in May
- Fringe Festival

**In Montreal,**

- FTA (festival trans amerique),
- CINARS an annual showcase for the performing arts attended by producers around the globe.

**In Calgary,**

- Festival of animated objects
- High Performance Rodeo - Calgary's in't festival of the arts hosted by one yellow rabbit.

**In BC,**

- Push Festival, VIDF (Van. Int'l Dance Festival), Powel St Festival.

**In Toronto**

- Kalanidi Indian dance festival, Can Asian Dance Festival,
- Contact (festival showcase of art photography)
- 7a\*11d (international of Performance Art)

## **HOW DO YOU START A TOUR?**

Important online information.

Canada Council site/ Outreach market development /ON THE ROAD  
<http://www.canadacouncil.ca/development/>

### **Touring Perspective**

- Vision and your work,**
- Planning**
- Resources and Support,**
- Venues,**
- Audience, integration and outreach.**

### **Vision and your work, starting point:**

Having a vision, the desire and need that your work can and should tour.

Start by asking the question why I want to tour and its importance to me or my organization, the relevance of the work to tour to a specific event, venue, region, and what would be the starting point?

What piece of work that you really feel could or should be share to others, by its contents and relevance.

Perhaps the work you want to tour is the most successful work that you have, or the work suits a certain festival or specific event, perhaps a presenter has seen your work during a performance at home in your region and you are invited in their venues, theater and even to a seasonal programming spot.

Or that you may also simply adore a city that you wish to visit and get to know and by sharing your creative work is the best way to

immerse to that community.

At times, the simplest step may be submitting or sending videos or samples, a proposal of your work for viewing to producers and curators.

Or simply invite a producer to see your show live, as presenters at times prefer to see the actual full content of a performance piece.

As well, in some cases for more established artists and organizations, a touring agent that deals specifically to marketing one's work, working with an agent's pursuit of local contacts and understanding how one's work could serve a specific region. An agent could post an interest to your work, or you may hire him to develop a touring working relationship and establishment of a touring mechanism for one's body of work or for the whole company.

### **Planning:**

Starting from who you may contact within your home-base/region to present your work to, figuring out and expanding your networks and connections at to national and international level and leading intuitive and inquisitive research into following and understanding their elemental ways of presenting and partnering to Festivals, marketing/showcase events or specific venues.

Timing, and assessing the best way to approach, market or solicit your contact, being ready to have a press kit, a portfolio, website or having ready simply an invitation to see your live show.

Active connectivity and fast communication is a tool and asset in keeping track of your network, maintaining awareness and pursuing a line of possible activities for a tour!

From preparing at home and being ready to take your work on the road to making sure that your touring engagements are in synch between different cities, times, dates and modes of transportation, technical requirements or the distance of travel that you are

undertaking is manageable for economical purposes as well as the environmental and health conditions of yourself and your group on tour.

Planning is an essential component that takes time, but will guarantee a proper understanding of your tour while on the road, to be prepared prior, while on tour, and after.

**Who will fund the tour/expenses prior and during, what and where are the resources from?**

The basic expenses I have covered in touring in different scenarios are:

(Pre-tour expenses, Artist salary fees, transportations, accommodations, freight, per-diem, insurance etc).

The assessment of feasibility of taking your work to the road is essential and very important. In my case, I travel with either 1 person or multiples with the company cast and technicians depending on the touring piece and the load of that particular work to go out on the road.

Often time, artists and organizations have stated that touring barely makes money, or even loses money, but the experience was immense, having generated new audiences and built alliances and further connections.

Other times, you may partner with the right presenters or festivals that can buy the work properly or be produced in established festivals with more lucrative and financial resources that cover most of your touring costs and received proper fees.

In fact for other companies touring has been their main source of revenues.

I have been in many scenarios where artistic fees paid to a show or touring engagement have varied and depended on the presenter's



resources as well as geographical locations, assessed by the different levels of negotiation within Canada regionally and national, and to further distances overseas in Europe where you deal with higher currency, or in south America and Asia where currency are much lower. As well, in relation to the time, scope and schedules of the touring engagements and other activities related and involved with it. You may deal with one engagement (1 show) or more (with outreach activities) in a touring engagement.

Access to Public or private Funding:

Could involve

- ( Grants, from municipal, provincial and national or Embassies, fundraising and sponsorships)
- co-partnership and co production with your venue or a self present touring engagements via box office revenues,

Perhaps the tour you wish to undertake is partly a marketing tool an investment to your work and your organization to promote the work or understanding a specific region or community for future touring.

### **Understanding Venues**

A piece of work can be presented in established venues to small, medium and big houses that have technical facilities and technical crew.

Or you may be presented in mediocre or low tech venues that may not meet the proper production value of your work and therefore be adjusting and adaptable to such situations and need to be prepared at all times.

Venues can differ between indoor and outdoor events and presentation/engagement at times is the best assessment in the early stages of the planning and negotiation and changes at the time of presentation.

At times you simply have to be resourceful, be prepared and ready to adapt quickly in a given situation.

I have had experiences and situations arriving in a venue where it is

different from the proposed invitation and sudden changes occur due to technical issues or simply lack of organization, but have certainly adapted to venues that are both challenging and groomed.

Providing and hiring proper touring technical directors or crew that can pre-plan and understand a touring venue to go to is highly recommended. It can achieve the requirements and needs of the creative work, to attain and meet a stress free engagement and to let the work breathe properly to the state and stage that it ought to be.

### **Who are your audience?**

Start by assessing this at home, your main audiences, then scope elsewhere within your closest region, national and international and then other diverse audiences that may not have seen your work in the past.

Touring can provide a discovery and a building network of new territories for one's creative work. People you meet in touring can eventually enlarge your reach of audience to a new region or future creative collaborators.

From an ethnical point view as for my case and experience, I am learning, understanding and widening my audiences within the Pan Asian community sustaining visibilities at home, national and in Asia. In Canada, in the past years reaching to my Filipino community and its multiple generational structures and how to understand and able to immerse within their boundaries and be involved or enter in their habitual presence.

This has been an ongoing work and aim-for a sustainable and continued creative network and dialogue.

Community engagements can easily be achieved while on tour, apart from the creative work you present are the exchanges towards educational and advocacy purposes, in workshops, master classes or public dialogue that can provide an open door of possibilities for further growth understanding cultures and people.

In overview, touring to me has brought a widening understanding of my work and its possible place elsewhere in the world.

Touring is not easy, can pose huge risks and bring exhaustion to the economic situation of an individual artist or company. But touring, to me, has also been a learning experience and educational pathway, embracing a global energy that is upon us.

Touring can be a fulfilling activity when you are fully immersed in the field and its wealth of sharing cultures, people and nations.

As a diverse artist, I have initiated different ways that work best for me and my creative work to find avenues that could lead to touring. Networking and continued partnership and collaborations among diverse artists in my home, national and international regions as well as venues has been a driving force and link that have led to opportunities to have my work on tour.

I have found barriers in some presenters and venues that continue to exist but enclosed in their chosen perspective and ways of programming and the place of diversification, artists and their works are yet to fully emerge and become established. These are barriers that we, as a collective diverse organizations and artists, will need to advocate for and continue to pursue for the visibility of creative diverse work.

I've certainly had and continue to be challenged within the margin of artistic political policy and it takes patience, determination and perseverance to continue and knock on people's doors to be invited and be presented.

The relevance of networking, nurturing and expanding our allies among our close knit supporter and followers are essentials, they are the backbone that continues to provide morals, supports and opportunities to express our work and concerns, help and serve each other to provide a cultural foundation and flat form for the visibility of diverse working artists.

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## **Suggested Web link networks:**

- [www.resartis.org](http://www.resartis.org)
- [/www.transartists.org/](http://www.transartists.org/)
- <http://www.zeroland.co.nz/>
- [www.live-singapore.com.se](http://www.live-singapore.com.se)
- CHRC (cultural human resources council)
- <http://www.culturalhrc.ca/aboutus/index-e.asp>
- [www.asianartsaccess.org](http://www.asianartsaccess.org)
- [www.labforculture.org/en](http://www.labforculture.org/en)
- <http://portal.unesco.org/culture>
- [www.art-forum-berlin.de](http://www.art-forum-berlin.de)